THE RELIGION WORTH HAVING

BY

THOMAS NIXON CARVER

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THOMAS NIXON CARVER

BOSTON AND NEW YORK
HOUGHTON MIFFLIN COMPANY
The Riverside Press Cambridge

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Published February 1912

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THE RELIGION WORTH HAVING

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RELIGION WORTH HAVING

We are developing a kind of religious liberalism which virtually says that one religion is as good as another, provided its adherents are equally honest and sincere. We do, of course, occasionally try to satisfy our Puritan consciences by insisting that every man must be true to his own ideals. In our moments of high religious zeal we may even go so far as to suggest that the salvation of one's soul consists in being true to one's ideals, even unto death; but that it makes any difference what those ideals are, or that there is any way of telling the difference

The new sectarianism

between a true and a false ideal, we are not quite prepared to say.

This position is logically possible only under two assumptions: first, that no religion is worth anything; second, that the only use of religion is to furnish its possessor with a kind of subjective satisfaction. One who holds that no religion is worth anything might consistently assume a superior air toward them all, and show his liberality by a large-minded willingness to humor them all alike as one humors the beliefs of children and other undeveloped minds. Again, one who holds that the only use of religion is to furnish its possessor with a kind of subjective satisfaction might consistently say that one is as good as another, provided it satisfies its possessor, provided it furnishes him with

the kind of æsthetic or emotional sensations which he enjoys, or contributes to his own inward peace and harmony. This places religion in the class of what the economist calls direct consumers' satisfactions, as distinct from productive agents, and the sole test of its value is the amount of satisfaction which it furnishes. One who holds such an opinion might hold that one source of subjective gratification is quite as good as another; that the sole test is, does it please the individual? This would reduce religion to a matter of taste, and there is no quarreling over matters of taste in religion any more than in perfumery or in flavoring extracts.

But if religion is of any use outside the field of direct subjective satisfaction, if it is not to be labeled "for inter-

nal use only," if, in short, it is a positive factor in social and economic development, it would be the rarest chance that any two forms of religion should be, and it is inconceivable that they should all be, of precisely equal value. Therefore, one who believes that religion has a positive use outside the field of æsthetic or emotional happiness could scarcely be a liberal of the common type. If he were sincerely patriotic, he would be forced to look about and see which religion seemed to contribute most to the social and economic development of the people who possess it, and of the community in which it flourishes. Having found out, he would be forced to become an advocate of that religion. Moreover, the more he felt his social responsibility, and the more patriotic he

was, the more passionately he would be forced to appeal to his fellow citizens to accept what he regarded as the best type of religion. He would be recreant to his duty to his country and his fellow men if he did not.

Whether, therefore, we are to become impartial religious liberals of the common sort, or ardent sectarians, will depend mainly upon our answer to such questions as: Is religion of any use to the world outside the field of æsthetic and emotional gratification? Is it a real factor in the social and economic development of the community or the world? If we answer these questions in the negative, we may remain as indifferent as the common run of religious liberals are to-day; but if we answer it in the affirmative, we can scarcely help becoming

sectarians, albeit sectarians of a new type. With our ardent sectarianism there may be combined a broad toleration based upon our deep faith in the ultimate triumph of that which we regard as the best type of religion. But this affirmative belief would put an end to our mere indifference. We could no more help becoming advocates of that form of religion which seemed to us best calculated to promote the progress of the world than we can now help being partisans of that form of government, or that political policy, which we think best suited to the same end. When the time comes, which God forefend, that government is looked upon as of no use except to furnish pastime and amusement to politicians, it will become as bad form to show political interest

and fervor as it is now to show religious interest and fervor. Contrariwise, when the time comes that religion is regarded as having as much use as politics, it will seem as natural, and as good taste, to show religious enthusiasm as it is now to show political enthusiasm.

Whether religion is of any use or not in the objective world depends upon a variety of circumstances. There is no doubt whatever that it may be, and frequently is, a means of furnishing motive power, or of stimulating activity of one kind or another, in those who possess it. It is a means of turning potential into actual, or latent into active human energy. Next to the desire for wealth and social esteem, there is probably no motive

Is religion of any use?

which develops so much activity in the world of men as religious enthusiasm. A just appreciation of the dynamics and the kinetics of religion will destroy that form of religious dilettantism which now goes under the name of liberalism. The tombs and temples that have been built, the crusades that have been carried on, the pilgrimages that have been performed in such laborious ways, the sufferings that have been endured with such patience and fortitude, not, as the cynic sometimes asserts, in the hope of earning a reward in some other world, but as a sheer expression of religious feeling, the violent religious dances prolonged often to the point of physical exhaustion, and even the intricate and overpowering ceremonial of our historic sects, all attest the power of religion to

galvanize the human body into action, or to let loose the stores of latent energy which lie hidden away in the human organism. If the energy thus developed or transformed into motion can be directed toward useful ends instead of being wasted in unproductive channels, religion may become one of the most powerful agencies of human progress. That is to say, if we can add the motive of religious enthusiasm to the other motives which now impel us to useful effort, we shall, of course, under the double stimulus of these combined motives, apply more energy to useful ends than we are now doing. That means progress. If, for example, as much energy as is developed by one kind of religious enthusiasm, but wasted in a pilgrimage to Mecca on one's knees, could be de-

veloped by another kind of religious enthusiasm and applied to the clearing of a piece of stony land, or the draining of a swamp, there would be something tangible to show as the result of religious feeling. This kind of religion would build up a prosperous and powerful community, which would support more life and support it more comfortably than any other. The teacher of such a religion could say with the utmost literalness, and without the slightest taint of mysticism, "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly." Such a religion would be a powerful factor in the progress of the world.

This gives us the answer to the question, What is the best religion? That is

the best religion which (1) acts most powerfully as a spur to energy, and (2) directs that energy most productively. That is the most productive expenditure of energy which supports the most life and supports it most abundantly, which gives the largest control over the forces of nature and the most complete dominion over the world, and which enables men to control whatever environment happens to surround them and to live comfortably in it.

The best religion

Many of the pagan religions seem to perform the first of these functions somewhat better than Christianity, at least than modern Christianity, does; but none of them has equaled Christianity in the second, that is, in the productiveness with which its energy has been

directed. Possibly it would be more accurate to say that they have all interfered with the productive expenditure of human energy more than Christianity has. The Christianity of the Middle Ages was probably more effective than that of the present in stimulating latent energy into action, but it was also most wasteful, or less efficient in the performance of the second function, that of directing its energy economically and productively. One of the great religious problems of to-day — perhaps it is not too much to say that *the* great religious problem of to-day — is that of regaining the fervid, energizing quality of the early years of Christianity, of early Mohammedanism, or of some of the more primitive types of modern Christianity, and retaining or improving upon the in-

telligence and efficiency with which some of the more liberal sects are now directing what little energy they are still able to develop. In other words, the problem is to restore to the religion of to-day its original potency as a motive force, and to combine with this the broad intelligence with which modern religious organizations are directing their rather feeble and half-hearted efforts. This would result in a combination of the best features of mediæval and modern Christianity and the elimination of the bad features of both.

The contrast between the mediæval and the modern spirit, and the necessity for a combination of the good features of both, is nowhere set forth in stronger colors than in Mark Twain's story of the "Connecticut Yankee at the Court

of King Arthur." And there is nothing more significant in that remarkable book than the Yankee's way of dealing with a certain anchorite. This religious zealot had condemned himself to the treadmill practice of bending and unbending his body — bowing and rising — all day long, day after day and year after year. That was his religion, — his whole religion as he conceived it, — and by its practice he had won for himself a reputation for transcendent piety. But to the hard-headed, practical Yankee this looked like a waste of energy, and he began to study how to utilize it and turn it to some good purpose. Accordingly he arranged a device by which the old ascetic was hitched to a sewing-machine, and as he continued to practice his religion he was made to turn the machine,

and thus his piety was turned to some account.

In this story, where mediæval asceticism and modern utilitarianism are so grotesquely contrasted, the author, who was quite as much philosopher as humorist, embodied the very life and spirit of our Western civilization, especially of our American civilization, whose peculiar product he was, and of which he was both spokesman and prophet. That the same practical spirit, with the same productive aim, is to dominate the religion, the morality, and the civilization of the future, we may safely predict. This will be the dominating spirit, because any religion, whatever its name, any system of morality, whatever its

The test of a good religion

origin, any civilization, wherever or by whatever people it is developed, which is dominated by such a spirit as this, will be able to hold dominion over all others or to exterminate them altogether. The religion which does not take on this practical spirit is doomed to extinction, and can no more hold out against it than the old civilizations of India, China, and Japan could hold out against the practical spirit of Western civilization. When Japan accepted this practical spirit she virtually decided to prolong her life and independence. To have rejected it would have been to decide in favor of subjection or death. The same alternative is held out to the religions of to-day. Those which accept the domination of the spirit of efficiency and productiveness are voting for their own survival and dominion.

Those which accept rather the spirit of impractical mysticism, or which continue to waste human energy in motionless contemplation, æsthetic pleasure, or emotional joy, are voting for their own subjection or extermination.

Every one is familiar with the intense struggle for existence that is carried on among the trees of a forest. It is asserted that the struggle is so intense, and the issue of life and death is so sharply drawn among the young pines of a thicket that the cutting of an inch from the top of one of them will doom it to ultimate extinction. Even that slight difference puts it at a disadvantage in the struggle for light, and it never regains what was lost, but falls farther and farther behind and is eventually killed by its less unfortunate rivals.

Now, let us imagine that trees were conscious beings and capable of having religion. Let us suppose, further, that one set of trees possessed a religion which stimulated growth and helped them in the struggle for soil and light, while another set of trees possessed a religion which retarded growth and hindered in the struggle. Is there any doubt as to which of these religions would ultimately dominate the forest? Those trees which happened to possess the religion which helped them would survive and those which happened to possess the kind of religion which hindered them would perish, and with them would perish their religion. Fortunately, or unfortunately as the case may be, the issue of life and death is never so clearly and sharply drawn among hu-

man beings as it is among trees, but in the long run the results appear to be very much the same. If that be true, it will follow that the religion which best fits men for the struggle with the forces of the world, which enables them to survive in this struggle, will eventually be left in possession of the world. This view is not so unorthodox as it may at first seem to some of our more amiable Christian brethren. They will find that the first recorded command in our sacred Book is to be fruitful and multiply and people the earth and subdue it and have dominion over it. It would be an illogical kind of religion which would begin by issuing this command, and then defeat itself by unfitting its adherents for the accomplishment of the end in view. The religion worth having is the relig-

ion which will enable its adherents to accomplish that grim purpose.

The religion worth having is the religion which brings the largest success in this final and ultimate sense to the peoples and nations which adopt it, and enables them to survive in competition with peoples and nations possessing any other type of religion. The religion is not worth having which brings failure in this physical and practical sense, which would unfit for the struggle for dominion the peoples and nations which adopt it, and cause them to succumb to the superior surviving power of other peoples with a more productive type of religion. The religion which enervates or subdues the spirit of a people, which does not develop their latent energy, or which wastes their energy in a kind

of effort which does not support life or support it abundantly, will fail because it will cause the failure of the people who are handicapped by it. But the religion which stimulates to high endeavor and develops the latent energy of its people, and directs that energy wisely and productively, will succeed because the people who are fortunate enough to possess it will succeed and hold dominion over the world. The world belongs by a law of nature, which is only another way of saying that it belongs by divine right, to that religion which combines most completely the enthusiasm of the old ascetic with the practical intelligence of the Yankee in the story just quoted. The people who possess such a religion will, other things equal, develop within themselves more productive energy than

they who possess a religion which enervates and depresses. Again, such a people will direct their energy more efficiently and productively and gain a larger control over the forces of nature. Such a combination of virtues will deliver the world into their hands and give them dominion over the rest of mankind as surely as mankind has been given dominion over the rest of the animal creation.

The conservation of human energy

But what does it mean in the concrete to direct human energy intelligently and efficiently? We ought all to agree that such exercitations as those of the whirling dervishes, or of the pilgrims who travel long distances on their knees, are examples of wasted or misdirected energy. Are

we ready to accept the eminently wise and practical saying of Zoroaster, that "He who sows the ground with care and diligence acquires a greater stock of religious merit than he could gain by the repetition of ten thousand prayers"? Such an expenditure of energy as this is calculated to sustain human life and to increase the fund of surplus energy available for the furthur conquest of the world. The race or the people which thus economizes its energy will increase in numbers and power more rapidly than a race or people which wastes its energy in ways which do not support life, or which do not increase the fund of surplus energy over and above that which is necessary for the support of daily life, — a fund available for the further conquest of nature.

This is not to be construed into meaning that all the energy of a people should be devoted directly to the work of producing food, clothing, and shelter, or the multiplication of numbers up to the point where it will take all the energy of the people to provide enough food, clothing, and shelter to sustain the life of its millions. A race or people which finds itself in a position where all its energy is required to provide the means of sustaining life is in a singularly weak position either for defense against enemies or for experimenting, pioneering, and adventuring, which are necessary for the further conquest of nature. It does distinctly mean, however, that every expenditure of energy which does not, either directly or indirectly, immediately or remotely, strengthen the people

and fit them for that conquest, is to be condemned. Every form of consumption or sensual gratification which weakens and enervates is to be called a vice. The fact that it weakens and enervates, that it interferes with the fitness of the people for that conquest, is what makes it a vice. But a lavish expenditure of energy, even in the form of amusement, if it is the kind of amusement which strengthens the body, or stimulates the pioneering and adventurous spirit, may be commended on the ground that it is strengthening the people, increasing their productive power, or increasing the fund of surplus energy which may be devoted to other purposes than the mere sustentation of life or the gratification of the senses.

Expenditures on art, literature, philo-

sophy, and religion are also to be commended on the same ground, but they must meet the same test. That is to say, the test of their soundness is not do they please, but do they strengthen the people, do they contribute to the success of the people in the process of active adaptation, or the conquest of nature. If these products of the human spirit inspire the practical, conquering virtues, they are sound: but if they cater to the vices which weaken and enervate they are vicious. If they stimulate economic virility, and increase the courage, patience, and fortitude with which men face their tasks, and give them a clearer vision as to the meaning of their tasks, and a sounder sense of value in the appraisal of the comparative worth of different kinds of work, they are fulfilling

their function; but if they lull to a life of ease and self-indulgence, they are a handicap in the struggle for possession of the world, and are therefore fundamentally and essentially vicious. The musicians, for example, are as truly a part of the fighting force of the army as are the men who handle the guns, provided the music be such as to stimulate and inspire the martial virtues. Imagine military men soberly discussing such themes as music for music's sake! No matter how the verbal argument might run, or which party might have the advantage in that windy contest, there is one final argument which would settle the question. The army which proceeded upon the theory that music was its own excuse for being, and that it made no difference what its effect was upon the

army provided it was beautiful and pleasing to connoisseurs, would be soundly whipped when it came in contact with an army which proceeded upon the opposite theory, namely, that music existed for the purpose of helping the army in the business of war, and justified its existence only in proportion as it contributed to victory.

Whether we contemplate a military group engaged in a conflict with other men, or an industrial group engaged in the conquest of nature, the question is fundamentally the same. In the one case, adaptation depends upon military efficiency, in the other case upon industrial efficiency, and everywhere nature's great command is "adapt or die." Everything must be tested, in the last analysis, by its bearing upon the great

problem of adaptation. An army may, by long practice of the military virtues, reach a position of relative security and, imagining itself unassailable, begin to waste its energies in the pursuit of pleasure. Then the theory that the army exists for the sake of its military bands, its artists, its chaplains, and other accessories, may gain headway. But eventually this tendency will bring itself to an end by the extermination of the army itself when it meets another army with less degenerate ideals. Similarly, an industrial society may, by long practice of the economic virtues, bring itself to a position of relative economic security. Imagining itself unassailable, it may then begin to waste its energies, to devote itself to graceful consumption, eminent leisure, or motionless contem-

plation of its own perfections, instead of self-discipline, efficient production, colonization, etc. Under such conditions the carnal mind is peculiarly open to the arguments of the "pig-trough" philosophy of life, which conceives that the purpose of life, of labor, and of wealth is enjoyment. But this process also will bring itself to an end because the society in which such a degenerating process gains headway will eventually give way before a society with sounder ideals. The world belongs, by a law of nature, to the disciplined and productive races and not to those who devote themselves to graceful consumption and eminent leisure. No amount of lofty discourse in the field of transcendental ethics, which is, after all, only a sublimated form of the pig-trough philoso-

phy, to which prosperous societies are singularly addicted, can get us away from this stern fact.

In the philosophy of adaptation, religion is no more an end in itself than music, art, or literature, though its devotees, like the devotees of these other forms of "culture," have sometimes schooled themselves to insist with straight faces that it is the sole end and aim of existence. Any society which conceives that it exists for the support of its religion will be as little likely to succeed in the struggle for a possession of a portion of the earth's surface as an army would if it were to devote all its energies to the support of its chaplains and its religious ceremonialism. Because they are unable to

Is religion an end or a means?

avoid this hard fact, the devotees of all these specialized forms of "culture" are accustomed to take refuge in a high and mighty attitude of superiority toward "mere" utility, "mere" success, "mere" everything except their own varieties of dilettantism. They are like the proud Brahmin who consoled himself that though he were compelled to submit to the English he could still despise them, and though compelled at times to have dealings with them it was permitted to him to bathe afterwards. They are, like this Brahmin, mercifully prevented by their own mental ophthalmia from seeing either the humor or the tragedy of the situation. Any form of culture which handicaps the people who possess it in the struggle for survival will eventually perish

with its people, and only those forms which help in that struggle will eventually be left in possession of the world. The Brahmin and all his kind receive their lives every day as a gift from their more powerful rivals, who humanely desist for a time from exterminating them. To all such devotees the gospel of science is, "Except ye repent ye shall all likewise perish." Repentance, in this sense, means the abandonment of the cult which weakens and the adoption of the cult which strengthens for the struggle for survival.

The pig-trough philosophy of life, in its variously solidified and etherealized forms, amounts substantially to this. The end of life and industry is enjoy-

The workbench vs. the pig-trough philosophy of life.

ment. We produce in order that we may consume, though our consumption may be gross or refined, may consist in filling our bellies, or in loafing and inviting our souls. To the carnal mind it appears self-evident that the end of all industry is the enjoyment of the fruits of it. If products increase sufficiently, it appears ridiculous that we should not indulge ourselves in some way or another. What is wealth for but to be enjoyed? is asked as though it admitted of but one answer. If we have more energy than is necessary to sustain life, why should we not burn up our surplus energy in eating and drinking, in art, literature, or religion, according as our interests are fleshly or neurotic? To such a mind it is inconceivable that the end of production might be further pro-

duction, that we should consume in order that we might produce, that if we have more energy than is necessary to sustain life the surplus should be used for further productive achievement, for a further conquest of the forces of nature, and an extension of our dominion over the world. The latter is the work-bench philosophy of life, and it is in competition with the pig-trough philosophy. In the end the work-bench philosophy will survive, because the people who adopt it and practice it will beat in competition those who adopt and practice the pig-trough philosophy.

There is a disposition to laugh the work-bench philosophy out of court in a time of general prosperity, but the merits of the two contrasted philosophies are not to be settled by any such cachinna-

tory contest. Nature has no sense of humor, — at least, according to vaudeville standards. There is another form of contest, upon the issue of which our judgment must depend. Which philosophy will win in the contest for the possession of the resources of the earth? Let us imagine two armies dominated by the two different philosophies, one holding to the idea that the purpose of a campaign is to secure loot and that the purpose of loot is enjoyment, either sensual, æsthetic, or religious; the other holding steadfastly to the idea that the purpose of campaigning is dominion, that loot, if taken, is to be used as an addition to the resources of the campaign and not for self-indulgence. Any temporary success of the first army would work its speedy undoing and its

final defeat, whereas every success of the second would strengthen it and equip it for further victories. Imagine, again, two industrial nations, one of which is dominated by the idea that the purpose of industry is wealth and that the purpose of wealth is enjoyment, while the other holds steadily, generation after generation, to the idea that the purpose of industry is dominion, and that every accumulation of wealth is to be utilized as equipment for further conquest of the forces of nature and further dominion over the earth. A result will follow in this case similar to that which would follow in the case of the two armies. This is a solemn kind of logic which will not be laughed away, and in comparison with which all the arguments of the pig-trough philosopher

are the merest casuistry. One of the great lessons of history is that the peoples who have succumbed to the insidious appeal to self-indulgence have grown weak and have lost ground as compared with the more virile and rugged peoples who have retained a simpler and sturdier view of life.

To the carnal mind it may still look illogical that men should eat in order that they may work, or consume in order that they may produce, — that the fruits of industry are not to be used for enjoyment, but to sustain life and energy for further industry. Yet, under the laws of the world in which we live, they who follow this rule seem to prosper more and last longer than they who follow the opposite rule. It is useless to contend that this is the wrong kind of a

universe, and that such illogical results ought not to follow, and would not if the universe were differently organized. This happens to be this kind of a universe, and we must get our conclusions as to what is right and wrong from an inductive study of the experiences of men in their struggles to adapt themselves to it. Pleasure and pain are mere signboards, pointing the way, and requiring a seeing eye and an understanding heart for their proper reading. Pleasure is a signboard which reads, "This way lies life," and pain is a signboard which reads, "This way lies death." They who read these signs correctly and are guided by them shall achieve life, but they who mistake them shall achieve their own extermination. They who seek pleasure as an end,

however, are mere collectors of sign-boards, who find no pleasure in them after they are collected, and are impeded by them on the way of life.

The struggle among social groups

Against the over-hasty conclusion that any kind of individual conduct which pays the individual is therefore good conduct and justified by the laws of natural selection, it is only necessary to mention the fact that, in the case of the human species, the struggle for existence is primarily and dominantly a struggle among groups. In the process of adaptation it has become a struggle among those territorial groups, exercising sovereignty, called states or nations. It is only among these sovereign groups that the primordial character of the struggle

persists; every other group, and every individual struggle is under discipline of one kind or another, according to the character of the state of which it or he is a part. This large fact is well summed up in one of Kipling's "Jungle Book" rhymes, —

> "For the strength of the pack is the wolf,
> And the strength of the wolf is the pack."

It is the pack as a whole which struggles to maintain itself in the midst of the jungle, and, in order to succeed and survive, it must discipline its members. The pack, like the state, is itself sovereign and therefore undisciplined except by the forces of nature and the competition of rival packs. That is a good wolf, from the standpoint of the pack, whose conduct, however unprofitable to himself, is such as to strengthen the

pack and help it to succeed. That is a bad wolf whose conduct, however profitable to himself, is such as to weaken the pack as a whole and interfere with its success. From the standpoint of the individual wolf, that is a good pack which is so organized and disciplined as to dominate the jungle. The average member of such a pack is better off than the average member of a pack so badly organized and disciplined as to be overcome by the hostile forces of the jungle. That pack is best fitted to succeed and to dominate the jungle which rewards with honor, power, and authority those individuals whose conduct contributes most to the success of the whole, and penalizes those individuals whose conduct contributes least to the success of the whole, or interferes most with

that success. Substitute "man" for "wolf," "society" for "pack," and "world" for "jungle," in the foregoing sentences, and we shall have, in a nutshell, the whole theory of rational morality.

The modified struggle among individuals

Though the human struggle for existence has become primarily an inter-group struggle, yet the struggle among individuals within the group is by no means eliminated. It has been modified, controlled, and directed so as to promote the efficiency of the group in its inter-group struggle. Every form of struggle among the individuals of the group which detracts from the strength and efficiency of the whole, or interferes with its success, will be suppressed, and every form of individual

struggle which adds to the strength of the whole and promotes its success will be kept alive by the group whose law-makers and religious leaders are wise. The group which fails to enforce both these rules is committing self-destruction. Every process or method by which an individual might enrich himself or promote his own interests at the expense of the group will be declared a crime or misdemeanor, — that is what these words ought to mean; but every process or method by which an individual may enrich himself or promote his own interest by contributing to the needs of the group must be cherished and protected. To enrich one's self by producing what the community needs does not impoverish but enriches the community. The more individuals there are

who get rich by this method and the richer they get, the better it is for the community as a whole. The more millionaires there are, the better off the rest of the people are, provided every millionaire has produced his millions, that is, provided he has added millions to the total wealth of the community, and provided he continues to use his accumulations as tools for further production rather than for personal consumption or unproductive gratification. But every dollar which a man gains, whether he be rich or poor, by methods which do not add to the strength of the whole community, is just so much subtracted from the surviving power of the whole. And every dollar's worth of wealth which a man consumes, whether he be rich or poor, in ways which do not maintain or

add to his efficiency as a producer, is so much wasted power and is subtracted from the power of the whole.

The relation of the struggle among individuals to the struggle among groups

The group which so regulates the struggle among its individuals as to secure the largest measure of success to those who strengthen the group most, and to bring poverty, failure, or punishment to those who strengthen it least or interfere most with its success, is the group which will survive in the struggle with all other groups who are less efficient in this form of regulation and discipline. Upon this form of regulation the very life of the group will ultimately depend, but it brings failure and poverty to those unfortunate individuals who are not

worth their keep, that is, who require for their own sustenance during their whole lifetime as much as they contribute to the strength of the whole. Again, under such a regulated struggle as this it will happen that the productive resources of the country will pass more and more into the hands of those who are capable of handling them most productively. This is, of course, quite as essential as it would be for the fighting resources of an army to be handled by those who were capable of handling them most effectively. Moreover, this is the clear and obvious meaning of the parable of the talents, which does not cause the slightest difficulty to one who accepts the work-bench philosophy, and who regards wealth as tools for furthur production rather than as means of self-

gratification. To the pig-trough philosopher, however, this parable has always been a stumbling-block, and he has invented various mystical interpretations to avoid the plain and obvious economic meaning which it was intended to convey. If wealth is tools for the further conquest of the earth, it would be a queer idea of a Kingdom of God which would not take the talents from the men who could not use them productively and give them to the men who had shown the greatest capacity to use them to the advantage of the Kingdom.

This is precisely what happens when the struggle among individuals, that is, economic competition, is properly regulated by the group. The farmer who can make a farm produce the most, over and above what he requires for his own

sustenance, will, in the long run, get possession of that farm, unless prevented by fraud or violence on the part of some other individual, or by unwise regulation and interference on the part of the state. Under the operation of well-enforced laws, and in the absence of unwise interference, the inevitable tendency is for the land of a country to get into the possession of the best farmers, and for it to be distributed in such quantities as give the best results to the country as a whole. Where farms are too small to get the best results, they are combined, as is being done in Iowa and the Middle West to-day. Where they are too large, they tend to be subdivided, as is being done in the Far West. Any attempt to force a different distribution would weaken rather than strengthen the na-

tion. Even the Kingdom of God, as expounded by the Great Teacher himself, embodied this principle.

The problem of getting the economic resources of the nation into the hands of those who can handle them most productively has never been solved so satisfactorily as by this method of productive competition. As with the farms, so with the shops and the business establishments. The business men who can make these resources produce the most, over and above their own sustenance, will eventually get possession of them, unless prevented by inefficient regulation of the competitive process, or by unwise interference with it. This inefficient regulation or unwise interference will, like unwise land laws, handicap the nation by putting its re-

sources in the hands of less efficient men, which is, in the end, quite as disastrous in industrial as in military activity. This is by far the largest aspect of economic competition; but it is an aspect which the opponents of that system either will not or cannot see.

The genius has never arisen who could even suggest a way of distributing the wealth or the places of power and responsibility in a nation without a struggle of one kind or another as a test. The very conceptions of wealth and value imply scarcity, and signify that men want more of certain things than they have got. Only such things possess any value, that is, they are the only things for which men will give anything in exchange or take any trouble to get. The

very fact that men are trying to get them is what enables the possessor of any one of them to sell it for a price, and the reason men try to get them is that men want more of them than they have got. That is what scarcity means. Such things alone make up the category of economic goods, which are the object of economic endeavor. The distribution of wealth means absolutely nothing except the distribution of things which need distributing because they are scarce, or which need to be properly distributed because if one man gets too much some other must get too little. This could not be true of anything which was not scarce. No one can think in terms of economic wealth without thinking in terms of a struggle of one kind or another.

The struggle among individuals within the group for wealth, place, power, etc., has gone through three distinct stages. The first stage is struggle by destruction, that is, private war; the second is struggle by palaver, that is, politics; the third is struggle by production, that is, economic competition. Chicanery has accompanied all three, but has not been essential to any of them. In war it consisted of using poisoned weapons and other devices contrary to the code of honor; in politics, it consists in trickery, demagogy, tall mendacity, etc.; and in economic competition it consists in deception, adulteration, fraud, and certain forms of high finance. In the several stages through which the struggle has passed, victory has gone re-

The stages in the development of the struggle among individuals

spectively to the fighter, the talker, and the producer, though the ubiquitous trickster, like the jackal, has always been present and has come in for a share of the spoils, whatever the form of the struggle.

In the first stage, the individual succeeds best who inflicts the most injury upon his fellows. His method of fighting benefits no one but himself. But the very nature of this struggle necessarily weakened the group to which he belonged and had to be suppressed, otherwise the group itself would be destroyed. Even the pack of wolves had to suppress fighting among its own members, in order that the whole fighting force might be conserved for the struggle against the forces of the jungle. In the human species the next stage was to substitute

the method of struggle by palaver, which was much more economical than struggle by private war. In this stage the success of the individual depends upon his skill in paying court either to the sovereign person or the sovereign people. It is by this method that men are chosen to fill places of power and responsibility. In this stage, the talkers beat the fighters and get all the best places, and get control of all the large interests. The fighters did not like this at first and frequently rebelled, and tried to carry the struggle back to the more primitive stage, knowing that, in that form of struggle, they would stand a better chance of success. They were, of course, plain reactionaries, but they called themselves revolutionists and progressives because they were trying to change the system.

But the method of palaver, while an improvement over the method of fighting, is a poor way of finding the best men and putting them in charge of the positions of responsibility. It is like deciding which is the fastest horse by argumentation and voting, instead of putting them all to the test on the race-course. There are, to be sure, some political offices for which men can be chosen in no other way than by argumentation and voting. It is a race among candidates, but it is a race for votes and not a contest in productive achievement. Where no other method is possible we must be content with this one, but no discerning person would imagine that it results in getting the best men in office. The crowd, however, in its enthusiasm over its new found toy, the

ballot, probably imagines that its choice is always the best possible one, never having a chance to become disillusioned by a practical test. If there were no other method of picking out the fastest horse and hitching him to the carriage of state, the crowd would probably feel a kind of supernal wisdom after it had chosen its favorite, and would never doubt that it had made the wisest possible choice; but the discerning horseman would know how shallow such judgments are and how much better the actual test of performance is than the test of popularity.

Fortunately it is possible, in an industrial society, to apply the test of performance, which was the test applied by the Master in the parable of the tal-

ents, in the selection of men for most of the responsible positions. This is the test actually applied, for example, in the selection of men to run the farms, since the farms tend to get into the hands of those who can make them produce the largest surplus over and above the sustenance of the farmers. This surplus is the fund available for the further conquest of nature, and the farms and businesses tend inevitably into the hands of those who can make them contribute most to this fund. This is a better test than the method of palaver, argumentation, and voting, and it results in putting the resources of the nation into the hands of a more efficient class of men. Under this test, however, the producers beat the talkers and get the

The parable of the talents and the test of performance

best positions, that is, the producers come into control of the resources of the country. The talkers do not like this result any better than the fighters liked it when they were beaten by the talkers. Accordingly the talkers are trying to restore the more primitive method of struggle by palaver, knowing that they would stand a better chance under that system. That is why so many large talkers, and so few large producers, are socialists. Here, again, the plain reactionaries call themselves revolutionists and progressives, merely because they are proposing a change.

Some of these reactionaries, however, are deceived into thinking that they would be doing away with the struggle, and creating a condition of universal love and good-will by merely putting

all industry directly into the hands of the state to be managed by political methods. This form of deception appeals very strongly to some of our religionists of the more liberal and amiable sort. But so long as more is better than less of any desirable thing, there will be struggle among men to get more. So long as one position in society is better than another, there will be struggle among men to get the more desirable position. The only question is as to the method of carrying on the struggle. There is just as intense a struggle in politics and the civil service as there is in industry. Moreover, the political struggle is of a meaner kind, because success depends less upon productive efficiency and more upon impudence and mendacity. The only effect of do-

ing away with economic competition would be to place everything under political competition, or a universal civil service. But the group which depends upon this method of selecting men for responsible positions, where the economic test of productive efficiency is possible, will lose ground as compared with the group which adopts the more accurate test of fitness and capacity, namely, which actually puts the farms, shops, factories, etc., into the hands of those who can make them produce the most and who can therefore pay the most to get possession of them.

Another delusion which appeals strongly to the shallow mind is that public property is more serviceable than private property to

Capital is socialized

the public. It is difficult for some people to see that all productive property is serving the public and must serve the public if the owner is to get any income from it. The more efficiently a piece of property is managed and the more it is made to produce over and above what the manager consumes, the better it is for the public or the group. All capital is socialized, whether the technical, legal ownership be lodged in an individual or the public. Only consumers' goods are individualized, — that is, devoted to individual gratification. Capital consists of the tools of production, but consumers' goods are means of individual satisfaction. The only way by which the owner of tools can get any good from them is by using them productively, that is, serviceably. That is all that can be

done with them when they are owned by the public. The only real question is whether they are likely to be used more productively when owned by the public and managed by a public official, than when owned and managed by a private individual. This is largely a question of the accuracy of the political as compared with the economic method of testing men for economic positions.

Under the strictest economic test, where chicanery is not permitted, the victory goes to the man whose production exceeds his consumption by the largest margin. This margin represents the rate of his accumulation of capital, and that determines his competitive power. That is, the rate of his accumulation deter-

The value of a man to the group

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mines his power to purchase land and tools. Therefore the land and tools will pass more and more under the control of those whose rate of accumulation is highest. They whose rate of accumulation of capital is highest will gain the largest control over the resources of the country and will therefore direct and manage these resources.

Not only does the individual's competitive power depend upon the margin of his production over his consumption, that is, upon his rate of accumulation, but his value to the group, or his contribution to the competitive power of the group in its struggle with other groups, depends upon precisely the same thing. He whose consumption exactly equals his production, or the cost of whose keep is equal to the value of his service, is

worth exactly nothing to the group, that is, he contributes exactly nothing to the competing power of his group against other groups. He is like the member of a boat's crew who pulls exactly his own weight. He contributes exactly nothing to the speed of the boat or the success of the crew. The surplus of his production over his consumption, or of his service over his cost, is what adds to the equipment of his industrial group for the further control over the forces of nature, and the further conquest of the material environment. That group which so regulates the struggle among its individuals as to give the greatest competitive power, and the largest measure of control over productive resources, to those who are worth most to the group, that is, to those who contribute most to the surplus of

the group's productive power, is the group which will increase its own strength most rapidly and will ultimately dominate the earth. The group that tries other experiments, however beautiful they may seem to idealists, will be beaten in the inter-group struggle.

The surplus of the individual's production over his consumption does not evaporate even when it is left in his own hands and under his own control and ownership. From the standpoint of the group it is as much a part of its competitive power as though it were owned by the group instead of by an individual. The only question is, Is it as likely to be used as productively when it is left in the hands of the indi-

Not who owns the tools but who consumes the product

vidual who has met the economic test of performance, who has shown, by actual performance, the efficiency and wisdom to accumulate it, as it would be if it were taken out of his hands and put into the hands of a public official who has been chosen for his position by the political test rather than by the economic test? When left in the hands of the individual who has shown the productiveness, the frugality, and the foresight to accumulate it, it may, of course, be dissipated in riotous living through a sudden change in the habits of its owner, or his heirs. That is a genuine danger. But when put into the hands of public officials it is also in danger of being dissipated by public extravagance of various kinds. There is this difference, however; such extrava-

gance and dissipation on the part of the private individual tends to correct itself, because it weakens his competitive power under the economic form of struggle, and will certainly put him, sooner or later, out of control of the resources of production; whereas, such extravagance on the part of a public official strengthens his competitive power under the political form of struggle and tends to perpetuate his control over the resources of production, to the permanent weakening of the group.

It must always be remembered that public property is not managed by the people themselves, it is managed by officials who are chosen, by the method of palaver, for that purpose. They who believe that this is the only method sanctioned by the Christian religion for

choosing men for positions of power and responsibility ought to make haste to rewrite the parable of the talents. In the revised form, the redistribution of the talents should be determined by town-meeting method of argumentation and voting. In that case, if the men who resembled the poor fellow who did n't know how to use his one talent happened to outnumber the one who knew how to use the five talents so efficiently, they would probably vote to put one of their own number in charge of the whole fund. They would then probably feel that a great popular victory had been won, and some rhapsodist would point to it as an example of industrial democracy. If the pig-trough rather than the work-bench philosophy happened to prevail in the community, and

talents were looked upon as means of gratification rather than as tools for the productive work of building up the Kingdom, the only thing it could logically do would be to take the ten talents from the plutocrat and give them to the public, where the one-talent man could get a chance at them, on the ground that the maximum efficiency of consumption demanded greater equality. Whatever the philosophy of life happened to be, control of the talents would pass into the hands of those who could win in the political rather than the economic form of competition, that is, whose skill consisted in getting votes rather than in making the talents produce other talents. But the question is not whether the group is satisfied with its choice or not, or whether it is satis-

fied with itself or not. Most groups are satisfied with themselves and their methods of choosing men. Groups always call themselves progressive even when they are degenerating and going straight to perdition. The question is whether the group can meet the requirements of the universe or not; whether it can compete with other groups under the rules of the game laid down by certain "ancient, elemental powers," and not of its own devising. The group which meets this test must adopt the most accurate possible test of fitness in choosing men for responsible positions within itself.

That the value of a productive agent to its owner is dependent upon the margin between its product and its cost or

maintenance, is perceived by every one capable of running a business. A horse whose daily earning power is exactly equal to the cost of keeping him, is worth exactly nothing. A horse which costs a dollar a day and earns a dollar and twenty cents is worth exactly twice as much as a horse which costs the same and earns a dollar and ten cents. It is not so generally perceived that this principle of valuation is not the result of commercial practices but the cause of them. This principle of valuation is universal, and the commercial practice is merely a reflection of it. Though the citizen is not owned by the state, and therefore has no commercial selling price, yet his real value or utility to the state or the group to which he belongs

The universality of the law of value

is precisely the same as though he had. If the state should assert property over him and start the commercial practice of buying and selling citizens, that would not create any new factor in the citizen's utility provided he kept the same habits. It would merely inaugurate the practice of estimating whatever utility he happened to have, and giving a quantitative expression to it for purposes of comparison and exchange. The perception of this great economic principle of valuation, and the application of it to non-commercial objects, such as men and moral qualities, is the leading characteristic of Christ's teaching respecting the Kingdom of God. He who gives much and takes little, whose service exceeds his demands by the largest margin, is greatest in the kingdom. The

Kingdom of God, as set forth by its greatest expounder, is nothing more nor less than a kingdom in which this principle of valuation prevails. That is the only objective characteristic of the kingdom which he ever emphasized. The nation which adopts the same principle of valuation as its basis of selection will approximate as nearly to the ideal of the kingdom as is possible in a world of physical reality.

That is the only conception of a kingdom of God on earth which is possible to a person who believes that this physical world is God's world, and that the laws of selection now in operation are God's laws. If that be true, the kind of a group which best meets the conditions and requirements of this world of struggle and survival, and which

can therefore win the world in competition with all other forms and types of social organization, must, of logical necessity, be God's kingdom. That group will survive which evaluates most accurately the fitness of its men to help in the struggle, and which distributes power and responsibility on the basis of that fitness.

This view of the situation will, of course, seem very shocking to those amiable liberalists who prefer their own standards to those imposed upon us by the conditions of the universe. They are like the woman who didn't like to have to eat wholesome food, but "liked to eat what she'd d'ruther." If the people like a certain thing and vote for

Not a question of likes and dislikes

it, why should n't they have it? They may have it, but their liking it will not obviate its consequences any more than the woman's liking for unwholesome food would obviate indigestion. No phase of religious liberalism of to-day is so demoralizing as the general appeal which is being made to popularity by presenting only the more pleasing, amiable, and sentimental sides of religion and goodness, under the impression, probably, that what the people can be persuaded to like in the way of religion and morality is necessarily good; or that if we can agree in liking a certain type of religious life that is all we need to trouble ourselves about. For a great many years certain half-baked moralists, of the sociological type, have been discovering and rediscovering the old and

time-worn fact that many of our ideals of conduct rest mainly upon custom and convention. They therefore jump to the conclusion that there is nothing to either religion or morality except custom and convention, and that one is as good as another if it only gets itself adopted by the popular will. These brilliant discoverers of what wise men have always known usually assume a scornful attitude, which wise men never do, toward "mere middle-class morality," as though middle-class morality were some kind of low-down occupation unworthy of gentlemen and scholars.

Against the idea that either convention or popularity, either ancient tradition or a majority vote, was an accurate test of value, Thomas Carlyle, who certainly can not be accused of having a

commercial bias, never tired of hurling the shafts of his grim irony.

Unanimity of voting,— that will do nothing for us if *so*. Your ship cannot double Cape Horn by its excellent plans of voting. The ship may vote this and that, above decks and below, in the most harmoniously exquisitely constitutional manner: the ship, to get around Cape Horn, will find a set of conditions already voted for, and fixed with adamantine rigor by the ancient Elemental Powers, who are entirely careless how you vote. If you can, by voting, or without voting, ascertain these conditions, and valiantly conform to them, you will get round the Cape: if you cannot,— the ruffian winds will blow you ever back again; the inexorable Icebergs, dumb privy councilors from Chaos, will nudge you with most chaotic "admonition"; you will be flung half-frozen on the Patagonian cliffs, or admonished into shivers by your iceberg councilors, and sent sheer down to Davy Jones, and will never get round Cape Horn at all! Unanimity on board ship; — yes, indeed, the ship's crew may be very unanimous, which doubt-

less, for the time being, will be very comfortable to the ship's crew, and to their Phantasm Captain, if they have one: but if the tack they unanimously steer upon is guiding them into the belly of the Abyss, it will not profit them much! — Ships accordingly do not use the ballot-box at all; and they reject the Phantasm species of Captains: one wishes much some other Entities — since all entities lie under the same rigorous set of laws — could be brought to show as much wisdom and sense, at least of self-preservation, the *first* command of Nature. . . .

If a man could shake out of his mind the universal noise of political doctors . . . and consider the matter face to face . . . I venture to say he would find this a very extraordinary method of navigation, whether in the Straits of Magellan or in the undiscovered sea of Time. To prosper in this world, to gain felicity, victory, and improvement, either for a man or a nation, there is but one thing requisite, — that the man or nation can discern what the true regulations of the Universe are in regard to him and his pursuit, and can faithfully and steadfastly follow these.

There was never a time when the rugged philosophy of the old Scotchman was more needed than it is to-day, when so many of us are so good-naturedly tolerant of every variety of conduct as well as of opinion, virtually saying that all conduct is merely a matter of likes and dislikes, or that one custom is as good as another provided it succeeds in getting itself adopted by the popular will. We need a clear perception of the solemn truth that it is quite as essential to the success of a group that its customs and conventions conform to the laws of the universe, as it is to the success of the individual that his habits conform to the customs and conventions of his group; that a group is no more free to adopt whatever customs and conventions happen to please

it than the individual is to follow whatever line of conduct happens to please his whim.

We are sometimes told, however, that nature is non-moral, or that science is unable to discover a moral order in the universe. This can not possibly mean anything more than that nature does not seem to conform to our peculiar notions of morality, or that the scientist is unable to see in the order of the universe anything resembling what he has been taught to regard as the moral order. If one had been taught a peculiar system of hygiene and afterwards discovered that nature seemed to pay very little attention to his system, he might then say that nature was non-hygienic, or

Is there a moral order of the universe

that science was unable to discover a hygienic order of the universe. That would, of course, be a very ridiculous thing to say; but it would be no more ridiculous than to say that nature knows nothing of morality. If we once perceive that morality is merely social hygiene, and that anything is moral which works well for society in the long run, and anything is immoral which works badly for society in the long run, we shall never be guilty of questioning the moral order of the universe. We shall then say frankly that whatever the order of the universe is, that *is* the moral order; that whatever social customs and conventions are found to fit into the order of the universe, and whatever private conduct is found to permanently strengthen the social group, that *is* morality.

That is, after all, the only conception of morality which is consistent with the highest religious thought. The most thoroughgoing religionist is he who believes that the universe is not only created by the divine will, but is momentarily supported by the perpetually creative activity of that will; that all the phenomena of nature, so called, are merely the manifestations of divine activity; that the observed uniformities commonly called natural laws are merely the observed uniformities of the operation of the divine will; and that the so-called miraculous, or supernatural, is merely an unusual, or extraordinary manifestation of the same will.

The moral order of the universe and God's law

While this is the most thoroughgoing form of religious belief which exists in

the world to-day, very few of the thoroughgoing religionists who accept it are willing to accept the conclusions which necessarily belong with it, which, in fact, cannot possibly be separated from it without self-stultification. One of these conclusions is that, since we can know the divine will only through its manifestations, a knowledge of that will is to be gained only by an inductive study of its manifested uniformities, that is, by a scientific study of what we call for convenience the laws of nature. If these laws are merely the manifestations of the regular, normal operations of that will, so regular that we come to expect them as a matter of course, whereas miracles and supernatural events are the rare and unusual operations, so rare and unusual as to surprise us when they happen, it

must follow that a fuller and more satisfactory knowledge of the divine will is secured through a study of natural laws than through a study of the miraculous and the supernatural. It is certainly more satisfactory to know what to expect regularly, every day, and all the time, of the being in whom we put our faith, than it is to know, even if it be true, that on rare occasions some astonishing manifestation (that is what the word miracle means) may occur to surprise us. However firmly such a religionist may believe in miracles, he could not logically deny that the emphasis should be put upon the uniformities rather than upon the things which merely cause wonderment because of their rarity. Moreover, he would have to agree that the only real school of theology is

a school where the uniformities of the divine order were studied by the methods of science. Finally, he would have to admit that the only person who is entitled to a hearing on any fundamental question of theology is the scientist. As a matter of fact, he is the only man who is listened to to-day by the really religious, as distinguished from the superstitious, part of our population.

Another conclusion which forms a necessary part of this religious belief, is that the laws of natural selection are merely God's regular methods of expressing his choice and approval. The naturally selected are the chosen of God. That nation, or that people, whose average individual character and conduct and whose

Natural selection and divine approval

social institutions and customs are such as to make them strong in competition with other peoples, and able to spread over the earth and subdue it and have dominion over it, becomes, by that very fact, the chosen people, whatever their name, language, or religion.

As to religion, however, the advantage must be on the side of those who put their faith in a God of law and order, whose will is expressed in the observed uniformities of the objective universe. The whole life of such people will consist in an intelligent effort to adjust themselves to the will thus expressed. They who have other gods before this God, who put their faith in a god of whim and caprice, who expect to win the favor of their god, and by this favor, success for themselves, through

charms, incantations, amulets, rabbits' feet, and comet pills, will fail, and their sins will be visited upon their children as long as their children last — say for three or four generations, that is, until their more efficient competitors drive them to the wall. Moreover, that mental attitude which thinks or speaks lightly of this God of law and order, which imagines that He can be cheated or eluded, which impudently follows its own whims and will not consider the awful responsibility of freedom, also handicaps the people who possess it.

If we proceed down through the decalogue and try to interpret each command in the light of real experience with the objective world, we shall find, to our surprise perhaps, that every one

of them is a part of the economy of the universe. It is only when they are interpreted in the light of an unreal and artificial kind of sentimentalism, sometimes miscalled spirituality, that they cease to impress the hard-headed, unemotional, but constructive minds who are, after all, the real builders of civilization. When properly interpreted, each command becomes a statement of a law of nature. Even the tenth and least understood of the commandments conveys a clear and definite economic meaning to any one who has, to begin with, the work-bench philosophy of life, though it is foolishness to any one with the pig-trough philosophy.

This view of life will seem like sacrilege to a great many excellent people who have been brought up in a faith

which emphasizes the so-called supernatural rather than the natural, in other words, the rare and exceptional manifestations of God's will rather than the regular and uniform manifestations. But it is not sacrilege, it is not irreligion; it is red-hot religion. It is the only religion which can take hold upon a mind trained to scientific habits and saturated with modern evolutionary philosophy, and make it feel "Woe is unto me if I preach not the gospel." Let it once be clearly understood that obedience to God's will as revealed to the scientist normally brings success to a nation, in other words, that righteousness *is* that which exalteth a nation, that righteousness is therefore loyalty and sin is disloyalty, and who could help becoming a preacher of righteousness.

ADAPTATION AND OBEDIENCE

Beginning with the concept of a God who expresses his will through the observed uniformities of the world of actual experience, it follows as a matter of course that they who obey this will most completely, that is, who adapt themselves most completely to their world environment, must succeed best, and become, by that very fact, the children of God. But they must not think that they hold this position by any permanent tenure. It is a tenure which must be earned through successful competition by every succeeding generation. A people which imagines that it has earned this position once and for all will find itself most ruthlessly dispossessed of its inheritance whenever another people arises who obey the objectively manifested will of

Adaptation and obedience

God more completely than they. This applies not only to a people or a nation as a whole, but to those individuals within the nation who succeed for a time through the practice of the economic virtues. A successful army has often, in the history of the world, become demoralized by its own success, has allowed the severity of its discipline to relax, has given way to the luxurious and weakening vices, and, as a result, has been defeated by some of its former antagonists whose very adversity contributed to their own discipline and, through this, to their final success. A successful nation in the industrial struggle has sometimes been demoralized in precisely the same way. Through a severe discipline in the practice of the economic virtues, wealth has accumulated;

but the temptation to luxury and ease has proved too strong, and the economic virtues have given way to the uneconomic vices, the pig-trough philosophy has dominated, and the economic advantage is speedily won by another nation, not yet arrived at the luxurious stage. Even within a nation the same process has long been observed. "From shirt-sleeves to shirt-sleeves it is only three generations," does not tell the whole truth. The course is rather from shirt-sleeves to extermination, and three generations is about the average time required for completing the course unless the family is disciplined by a religion which holds it true to the productive life and the work-bench philosophy.

In this observed uniformity the Protestant churches may learn an awful lesson. It is no accident that every Protestant country has outstripped every Catholic country, just as every Catholic country had outstripped every pagan country. Nor is it any accident that in Protestant countries religious people, especially those of the stricter sort, have as a rule outstripped the irreligious people. If these things be accidents, they occur with an amazing uniformity which would be hard to explain.

The crisis of Protestantism is an economic crisis

The stricter discipline in essentials, and the less strict insistence upon non-essentials, which characterize the leading Protestant churches, have resulted in a greater economy of energy and more productive lives among Protest-

ants than among Catholics, and among religious than among irreligious people. It would be a poor kind of religion which would not produce this result. But this very discipline in the productive virtues may prove the undoing of the Protestant churches. It has brought a degree of success and prosperity which no people has yet been able to withstand. The Catholic Church having already failed in this respect, it is compelled to fall back more and more upon demagogic arguments, and to try to win back by talk what its people are losing in the contest of performance. Left to the test of productive achievement, its people would be beaten more and more; but in the field of palaver, it is still strong. It can still put forth large claims to a doubtful historic origin and a past

in some respects glorious. But its past will not save it. Unless it can make its people excel in the field of productive achievement, they will become more and more the hewers of wood and the drawers of water for their more intellectually and morally capable competitors. If they succeed in any country in dominating through talk and politics over the more productive non-Catholics, then that country will follow in their downward course all the other countries where Catholic influences dominate. Your ship cannot round Cape Horn through reliance upon its historic origin any more than by its excellent plans of voting.

As between religious and irreligious people in Protestant countries, the greater

productivity of the former is shown in what is sometimes referred to as the separation of the churches from the masses. This separation has two different aspects, and each aspect has a special significance of its own. In one sense, a separation is what was to have been expected and desired, if by separation we mean the larger prosperity of church people. If a religion is worth anything it ought to be a means of conserving human energy, of avoiding waste and dissipation, of stimulating the productive virtues. People with such a religion could scarcely help prospering out of proportion to people who waste their energies in sin and dissipation — that is what sin is, and nothing is sin except waste and dissipation. But

The separation of the churches from the masses a normal economic result

this aspect of the separation of the church from the masses is displeasing to those who are beaten, and their natural recourse is talk, muckraking, and palaver. If the government were inefficient enough to allow it, there would also be recourse to the still more primitive method of war to win back what the irreligious have lost by being beaten in the higher struggle of productive achievement.

It is just at this point that the religious liberal is in greatest danger of displaying his weakness and vacillation, if he be weak and vacillating. He is under peculiar temptation to join in this demagogic cry against the separation of the churches from the masses. If religion is merely a matter of likes and dislikes, it would sound finely democratic to talk

about the iniquities of a world in which the people whom we happen to like are beaten by the people whom we happen to dislike. If I like the gay sport and dislike the stern Puritan, I may be very much disturbed when I observe that the gay sport fails as a rule, except in politics, whereas the stern Puritan succeeds under the test of productive achievement. Or if I like the amiable spendthrift and dislike the frugal, hard-working Pennsylvania German, and yet observe that in spite of my likes and dislikes the amiable spendthrift goes to the wall while the Pennsylvania German is buying out his neighbors and broadening his acres, I may get very sarcastic in my comments upon the social arrangement in which my likes and dislikes seem to count for so little. Seeing that what I

like fails and what I dislike succeeds with such uniformity, I might even reach the conclusion that this is not God's but the Devil's world; for, of course, God, being all wise, would agree with me, and if this were His world He would give success to that which I approve and failure to that which I disapprove. If such were my attitude, I might, lacking a sense of humor, even claim for myself the inheritance of the earth which is promised to the meek.

Two aspects of the separation

But there is another aspect of this separation of the churches from the masses which is not so creditable to the churches. Having achieved such a degree of prosperity through the practice of the economic virtues, they show signs of

succumbing to the temptations of the pig-trough philosophy, of giving way to luxury, pride, and ostentation, and thus erecting a barrier of pride and exclusiveness between themselves and the masses. This barrier of pride and exclusiveness is not only deplorable in itself; it is also a sign of the demoralization of the church and its people. The worst result of this demoralization is not the aloofness of the masses from the church; they who are beaten by men of a severer discipline invariably dislike that discipline and affect to despise it. That need not disturb the church. The worst result is that this demoralization will destroy the very prosperity of the churches and their people. The real crisis in the life of the church comes when it sees that its discipline and pro-

ductiveness have brought their normal result, and it begins to consider what to do with the fruits of its own prosperity. The question then arises, What is the use of maintaining this strict discipline in the productive virtues? Have we not already secured the means of enjoyment? Is not that the end of effort? Why keep up the struggle when we have already attained the end of the struggle? When these questions arise, the work-bench philosophy is giving way to the pig-trough philosophy, and ruin is impending. That was precisely the trouble with a certain rich man who said to his soul, "Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry." Be it observed that the condemnation of this rich man came not because of his

riches but because of his attitude toward them. To him they had ceased to be tools and had become means of ease, luxury, and self-gratification. He had fallen from grace, that is, he had given up the work-bench philosophy and adopted the pig-trough philosophy. At that point he lost his soul.

Which is the true church is a question of the future and not of the past

Because no people has yet succeeded in withstanding the temptation to turn from the productive life to the life of ease and enjoyment when the productive life had brought its normal results, is no reason why it may never be done. But here is the present problem of the Protestant churches. They have supplied a discipline which fitted their people admirably for adversity and

poverty, and which enabled them to rise out of these conditions. Are they able now to supply a discipline which will fit their people for prosperity, and hold them true to the productive life when a life of ease and luxury is possible? If they cannot, nothing can save them. A nation, church, or community cannot live on its past any more than an individual can. The fate of the Jews ought to teach us that. Nothing could be more futile than to argue that because the church is God's own institution, therefore it cannot fail. Whether it is God's institution or not will be determined by whether it fails or not. It is not a question of origin, but a question of outcome. Which is the true church is not a question of the past; it is a question of the future. It is not a question of history;

it is a question of future adaptation and selection. That will prove itself to be the true church which eventually wins the world in fair and free competition, and in that competition there are no favors. Moreover, God is not to be cheated by demagogic successes. Suppose one church should win this country in a mere demagogic contest for popularity; this country would then start on its downward career, and eventually succumb to a country with a more productive and less demagogic religion. This may take a long time, but there is plenty of time. The world belongs by a law of nature, which is the only kind of divine right, to that church which gives its people the discipline which will enable them to people the earth, to subdue it, and hold dominion over it.

The church which eventually achieves this result will have proved itself to be the Church of God.

There is little likelihood that this victory can go to a church which emphasizes its historic antiquity as its chief claim to support. In fact, it is unlikely that it can go to any church which relies mainly on its appeals to the crowd. There will always be muckraking demagogues who can beat it in that kind of a contest in the field of talk. Nor is it likely that it can go to a church that encourages its people to rely upon amulets, relics, the intercession of priests, or miraculous intervention of any kind. Any pagan religion can present better statistics in support of its claims to this kind of power. Even the notorious Dowieites can show more miraculous cures. The advantage

is likely to lie, rather, on the side of those churches which teach their people to rely upon exact scientific knowledge of the laws of nature or the observed uniformities of God's will, and not to rely in their conceit upon breaks in those uniformities. But the important thing to remember is that the field is still open, and new contestants for the position of the true church may enter at any time. The question will be decided by the future and not by the past. The victory may go to some church already strong; it may go to the Christian Scientists; it may go to the Mormons; or it may go to some church as yet unborn. Only one thing is certain, it will go to the most efficient; not the most efficient in the field of talk, but the most efficient in the field of production.

The efficiency of its discipline is the only ground upon which a church has any right to appeal for approval and support. The church that can say to the unchurched, "Our way of life is best because it works best. Our people are efficient, prosperous, and happy because we are a body who aid one another in the productive life. We waste none of our substance in vice, luxury, or ostentation. We do not dissipate our energy in brawling, gambling, or unwholesome habits. We conserve our resources of body and mind and devote them to the upbuilding of the Kingdom of God, which is not a mystical but a real kingdom. It is a body of people dominated by ideals of productivity, which is mutual service. We do not strive for the

The grounds of the appeal of the true church

things which satisfy but for a moment and then leave a bad taste, we strive for the things which build us up and enable us and our children to be strong, to flourish, and to conquer. We strive to make ourselves worthy to receive the world by fitting ourselves to use the world more productively than others. We believe that obedience to God means obedience to the laws of nature, which are but the uniform manifestations of His will; and we try by painstaking study to acquire the most complete and exact knowledge of that will, in order that we may conform ourselves to it. We believe that reverence for God is respect for these laws, that meekness is teachableness and willingness to learn by observation and experience. By practicing this kind of meekness, or teachableness, we believe

that we shall inherit the earth; whereas the unmeek, the unteachable, the pig-headed, who are dominated by pride of tradition, shall not. We offer you hard work, frugal fare, severe discipline, but a share in the conquest of the world for the religion of the productive life."

The church which could make this appeal without exaggeration might be temporarily less successful in winning converts than some others, but such as it did win would be worth having. Every convert would be won from the unproductive to the productive life. Its people, by the conservation of their energies, would extend their power and influence through their success in the productive form of competition, even if they were less successful in the windy contest of talk and palaver. But the sons

of Belial would, of course, begin to wag their heads and put out their tongues and write derisive articles for the popular magazines. The prosperity of this lean and efficient congregation would call forth resentment, and men whose eyes stick out with fatness would begin to talk piously about the materialism of the church; gentlemen of elegant leisure would talk, over their mint-juleps and clear Havanas, about the deplorable separation of the church from the masses; socialistic speakers, in rooms foul with bad air, beer, and tobacco, would denounce the selfishness and greed which was putting these people of clean and wholesome habits ahead of themselves; and even some churchmen, whose very clothes reek with the evidences of self-indulgence, would ex-

press great concern on account of the decay of spirituality. But this church would be founded upon the rock of economic efficiency, and the gates of hell should not prevail against it.

Two kinds of rich men's and poor men's churches

But before any one expresses disapproval of rich men's churches, he would do well to consider that there are two kinds of rich men's churches. There is the church that teaches the productive life and disciplines its members in the productive virtues. Such a church could not help becoming a rich men's church, because it would be making its people rich and prosperous. Not to become a rich men's church in this sense is a disgrace and an evidence of failure to perform its mission. Then there is the

church which becomes a rich men's church because it is a church into which a certain type of rich men like to get as soon as they can afford it, just as they like to get into certain fashionable clubs. Criticism of this kind of a rich men's church is well directed, but it should be discriminating. Moreover, such rich men's churches are bringing themselves to an end through race suicide.

Similarly, there are two kinds of poor men's churches. The church which keeps its people ignorant and inefficient will always be a poor men's church; but instead of boasting it should be ashamed of the fact. The church, however, which ministers to a neighborhood where poor people live, but gives them a discipline which enables them to rise out of poverty, and passes them on to other neigh-

borhoods to make room for other poor people who are coming in, and by repeating this process continues to minister to the needs of poor people, but of an ever-changing body of poor people, is the only kind of a poor men's church to be proud of.

Lest this be interpreted as a glorification of riches in the vulgar sense, let us repeat once more that wealth in the hands of such people is not means of gratification, but merely a surplus of productive energy, stored up for use in gaining a further mastery of the forces of nature and a further conquest of the earth through greater and greater productive efficiency. It does not consist wholly in material instruments. It may consist largely in sources of inspiration to high endeavor, in means of stimulat-

ing the productive virtues, in books and instruments of precision for the extension of the knowledge of and control over the forces of nature.

The way of temporal salvation

Every unfortunate and oppressed people has, well within its reach, this safe and sure means of deliverance from its bondage, if it only have the wisdom to see its opportunity, the faith to lay hold upon it, and the courage, patience, and fortitude to persist. But everywhere such people have been impatient of God's slow but safe way, and have sought to take the kingdom of heaven by violence. The Negroes in America have their preachers of an emotional and mystical religion, they have also their fiery political agitators, and they have Booker T.

Washington teaching them the productive life. Most of us are wise enough to see that for them the way of the productive life is the way of wisdom; but we are not always wise enough to apply the same rule to ourselves.

The Irish people have their elaborate and overpowering ceremonial religion, and they have also their fiery political leaders, trying to rouse them to political resistance, neither of which will do them any good. They will receive their political freedom, if they receive it at all, as a gift from the more productive and powerful race which rules them, and which holds them in the hollow of its hand, having complete power of life and death over them. But they have also Sir Horace Plunkett, teaching them the productive life.

Therein lies their salvation. Even the gift of political independence would do them no good unless they were able to use their energies productively; whereas, if they were as economically productive as their neighbors across the Channel, among whom greatness is measured by production, that is by service, rather than by talk, they would not have to receive their independence as a gift, because they would be able to take it without begging for it.

The Russian people have their intricate and tinsellated religion, and their fiery revolutionists, but none of these things can help them while they remain sodden with ignorance and vice. They had their Tolstoy, teaching them the productive life, and therein and nowhere else lies their sure salvation.

The Jews nineteen centuries ago were longing passionately for deliverance from the Roman yoke, which was a real and not a mystical yoke. The priests were praying and the people were wailing in the temple, calling upon God to deliver them; but deliverance never comes in that way. They also had their fiery revolutionary leaders, inciting them to revolt. That was tried, but it failed miserably. One man, a hard-headed Galilean carpenter, who had learned through the handling of things that this world is under a rule of law, saw that deliverance was not to come in either of those ways. Like all other desirable results, it would come in harmony with the laws of economic causation, that is, in harmony with the uniform operation of God's will, and in no

other way. Accordingly, He began preaching the gospel of the productive life. If they had listened to his message and followed his teaching, they would have laid deep the economic foundations of the kingdom of heaven. They would have conserved their energies and wasted none of them in idleness, in quarreling, in dissipation, in vice, in luxury, or in fruitless talk and palaver. Every ounce of energy would have been utilized in productive service. A people who would thus conserve and utilize their energies would eventually grow so strong that no human power could hold them in subjection. But to live true to such a life of productive service required more spiritual vision and moral discipline than the Jews possessed. They were under the domin-

ation of the talkers, and the greatest among them were the biggest talkers rather than the largest producers. Consequently they rejected his message, and were in consequence themselves thrown on the scrap heap of nations, not by a special manifestation of divine wrath, but by the normal working of economic law, which is merely the normal and uniform operation of God's will.

What the true church can really do for the laboring classes

These lessons of experience the laboring classes of to-day may well take to heart. They also have their religious leaders persuading them to rely upon the rare and exceptional, rather than the normal and uniform operations of the divine will; that is, upon the so-called supernatural rather than natural laws.

Anybody ought to know that it is safer to rely upon the regular, normal, and uniform operation of God's will than to expect help from some irregular and astonishing manifestation. They also have their fiery agitators inciting them to revolt and revolution. The experience of the world furnishes no reason for expecting help from this source. But if they had leaders who would teach them the principles of the productive life, and if they had the wisdom and the moral courage to follow, they would eventually achieve an independence of their own.

If a preacher of righteousness who had the spiritual vision to see that righteousness and productiveness are synonymous could start with a congregation of laboring men, however poor they were

to begin with, and could actually lead them in the way of the productive life, his congregation would become economically independent as surely as day follows night. They would learn, under his ministration, to adopt those habits which conserve energy and maintain the highest efficiency of body and mind, training their productive powers as carefully and as religiously as a pugilist or a football player trains his destructive powers. They would study to improve their efficiency as carefully as a boxer studies the science of self-defense, or an artist the principles of his art. They would study teamwork as carefully as a crew or a football team. They would waste no energy in brawling or in unproductive contests. They would make sacrifices in order that their children

might receive the best possible education, the kind of education which would increase their productivity and usefulness to the maximum. In three generations this would be a rich men's church, and would have the honor of having home-made rich men instead of having acquired them ready-made. Meanwhile they who had not had the courage, the patience, and the constructive faith to follow his teaching would still be inveighing against the injustice of society, and pointing to this church as an example of the way in which the churches were forsaking the poor and catering to the rich.

But where is there a preacher of righteousness with such a vision and such a faith? He is found here and there among the humbler and less pretentious

sects, such as the Pennsylvania Germans, the Methodists, the Scotch Presbyterians, and the Mormons. But among the conspicuous preachers of the more fashionable sects such faith is not to be found.

The Kingdom of God is a kingdom of productive power at work, and not a kingdom of æsthetic enjoyment or emotional happiness, much less a kingdom of talk. It therefore requires no mystical interpretation to give credence to the promise of prosperity to those who seek the kingdom of heaven upon earth. Neither does it require any miracle to bring about the literal fulfillment of that promise, for it would come about through the normal working of economic law. When all the latent energy of a people is made active, when it is directed in the

most intelligent manner toward the satisfaction of real human needs, when none of it is wasted or dissipated in injurious, antagonistic, or destructive effort, such a people will attain to a degree of real prosperity hitherto unknown.

The fellowship of the productive life

If the Christian fellowship becomes a fellowship for the promotion of the productive life, then Christians will become more productive farmers, mechanics, and business and professional men than non-Christians. If that result should be achieved, Christians will eventually own the farms, fill the shops and the offices, and direct the business affairs of the world. If that should happen, this will be a Christian world; otherwise it will not.

Man has been enabled to hold domin-

ion over the rest of the animal creation by reason of the greater efficiency with which he has directed his energy. His greater efficiency has been due, first, to his greater knowledge of and control over the forces of nature; second, to his greater self-discipline whereby he has subordinated his immediate but lesser interests to his more remote but larger interests; third, to his greater sociability, whereby he has combined his efforts with those of his fellow men and worked with them for a common purpose. Any part of the human race which possesses superior efficiency of these three kinds will be able to hold dominion over the rest of mankind as surely as over the beasts of the field, the fowls of the air, and the fish of the sea. Any part of the human race which falls behind in any

of these three particulars must give way before their more productive neighbors as surely as the Indian has given way before the European. This is the law of nature, which is the law of God, to deny which is to deny that this is God's world.

Belief in the general uniformity, the certainty, and the beneficence of the laws of God is the highest kind of faith. That is a lesser faith which trusts in charms, incantations, rabbits' feet, comet pills, amulets, priestly intercession, and other devices for protection. The resort to such devices is based upon fear that the laws of God may fail us in an emergency, that His grace be not sufficient for us. The faith which really removes mountains, the only kind of faith which ever

The higher vs. the lower faith

did remove mountains, is faith in the calculability of God's laws, and a willingness to venture out in obedience to them. This is the faith upon which great engineering feats, great productive business enterprises, and great discoveries in science are based. The world belongs, by a law of nature, that is, by the law of God, to those nations and peoples who possess this faith in the highest degree.

Who are the meek?

They who fully realize the universality of God's laws, otherwise known as natural laws, who are ready to learn what these laws are, and who willingly submit to them, are the meek. They do not have the conceit to think that God will change the regular order of his procedure for their bene-

fit. They say, "Thy will be done," and then try to adapt themselves to that will. That they shall inherit the earth is a scientific proposition, a statement of a law of nature. The unmeek are they who will not be taught, who are wise in their own conceit, who stubbornly persist in cherished error, who proudly defy the laws of God, who raise the puny arm of rebellion against the order of nature, or who have such a sense of their own importance as to expect that God will change the regular order of his procedure for their benefit. Instead of adapting themselves to His will as revealed in the laws of nature, they try to impose their wills upon Him. Since the meek are to inherit the earth, all these unmeek are to be exterminated by the process of natural selection.

Reverence is an appreciation of the righteousness and beneficence of the universe of law, a recognition of natural law as divine law. Irreverence is the spirit which scoffs at all law. Reverence pays.

Reverence

The productive life is the life of faith, of meekness, and of reverence, as these terms have just been defined. The church, as a school of faith, of meekness, and of reverence, may be sure that its mission is eternal if its work is blessed with the success which the productive life brings. This success will be the visible sign of divine approval. The people who lead the productive life most completely, and who flourish most in consequence, become by that very fact the chosen people of God. The people who lead the unproductive life, and who

fail in consequence, become, by that very fact, the rejected of God.

The Fellowship of the Productive Life is the highest form of Christian fellowship. It is the fellowship of those who strive to cultivate among themselves the constructive faith which sows, builds, and invests in productive enterprises. They who belong to this fellowship must consume in order that they may produce, limiting consumption to the amount necessary for the highest efficiency, and using all surplus wealth as tools for further productive service; but regarding as corrupt all wealth not earned by productive service, whether it be in the hands of the rich or the poor. They regard all productive work as of

The discipline of the fellowship of the productive life

equal sanctity, and enter upon the work of the shops, the farms, the business houses, and the political offices with the same religious zeal as that which now actuates those who preach to the heathen, or minister to the sick. The prosperity which must necessarily come to this fellowship means greater and greater power for service, and not greater and greater means of self-gratification.

Again, this is the fellowship of those who strive to cultivate among themselves the teachable spirit, and to eliminate from among themselves all stubborn and ostentatious pride in preconceived ideas and traditions, as well as in wealth and position. It is also the fellowship which strives to cultivate the spirit of reverence for all natural or divine law, and for the justice of its results. They who belong

to this fellowship cannot be covetous or jealous of the success of those who prosper through obedience to this law. They realize that under the productive life greatness is the result of productive service, and the greatest is he who renders the greatest service or produces the most over and above what he consumes.

Again, the Fellowship of the Productive Life is the new conception of the Church militant. It is the new crusade of the Church militant for the conquest of the world. In season and out of season is the call to be made for men to abandon the unproductive and take up the productive life. No human being is to be regarded as beyond the reach of this call. *But*, they who do not respond to it but persist in their

The church militant

unproductiveness, are doomed, which means damned. They refuse to conform to the universal laws of success, and nature damns them. It is nature's retribution — and God's. They are the barren fig trees which cumber the ground.

This new crusade ought to fire the zeal of the Christian as no old crusader's zeal was ever fired. The task is not the trivial one of rescuing the holy sepulchre from the hands of the infidel, but the vastly greater and more worthy one of rescuing the farms, the shops, the business affairs, and the governments of the world from the hands of the unproductive, which means the immoral, the un-Christian. This task is not to be achieved by the destructive methods of the old crusader, but by the productive methods of modern industry and social

service, and the cultivation of reverence for the laws thereof. If Christians make themselves worthy to receive the world by making themselves more productive than others,—able to use the resources of the world to better advantage than others,—then the world will be actually delivered into their hands, not by miraculous intervention, that is, not by some sudden and unusual manifestation of divine power, but by the sure process of economic law, which is, properly understood, the regular, uniform, everyday manifestation of divine power.

What attractions does the Fellowship of the Productive Life offer?

What the fellowship offers

To young men it offers days of toil and nights of study. It

offers frugal fare and plain clothes. It offers lean bodies, hard muscles, horny hands, or furrowed brows. It offers wholesome recreation to the extent necessary to maintain the highest efficiency. It offers the burdens of bringing up large families and training them in the productive life. It offers the obligation of using all wealth as tools and not as means of self-gratification. It does not offer the insult of a life of ease, or æsthetic enjoyment, or graceful consumption, or emotional ecstasy. It offers, instead, the joy of productive achievement, of participating in the building of the Kingdom of God.

To young women also it offers toil, study, frugal fare, and plain clothes, such as befit those who are honored with a great and difficult task. It offers also the

pains, the burdens and responsibilities of motherhood. It offers the obligation of perpetuating in succeeding generations the principles of the productive life made manifest in themselves. It does not offer the insult of a life of pride and vanity. It offers the joy of achievement, of self-expression, not alone in dead marble and canvas, but also in the plastic lives of children to be shaped and moulded into those ideal forms of mind and heart which their dreams have pictured. In these ways it offers to them also the joy of participating in the building of the Kingdom of God.

When did the young men of our race ever fail to respond to a call to sacrifice when they could see a connection between the sacrifice and a result worth achieving? Was there ever a time in

the history of our race when young women were not eager to respond to a call to such a life of toil and service when coupled with such a mission and such a vision?

THE END

Carver, T.
The religion worth having.

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